



City of Salinas

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March 19, 2002

Honorable Robert O'Farrell
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Monterey County
P.O. Box 1819
Salinas, California 93902

SUBJECT: 2001 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
Animal Services in Monterey County

Dear Judge O'Farrell:

The City of Salinas is responding to the findings of the Monterey County Grand Jury 2001 Final Report - Animal Services in Monterey County. I would first like to take this opportunity to thank each member of the Civil Grand Jury for giving of their time to assist us in improving our community's quality of life.

The Salinas City Council is pleased with City Animal Shelter Services staff efforts over the last two years to improve adoption and return to owner rates. Since the Monterey County SPCA decided not to renew the City's animal sheltering services contract in 1999 along with other jurisdictions in Monterey County, the City of Salinas has aggressively worked to redesign its animal control and sheltering services. The City is currently working collaboratively with other jurisdictions in Monterey County, the Monterey County SPCA, local rescue groups, veterinarians and local feed stores to address issues of public education, abandonment, euthanasia, spay and neuter services.

The City, in addition to working collaboratively with others has made a significant financial investment in the long-term welfare of our residents by opening its own animal shelter in 2000. The cost of this facility, which was placed on land already owned by the City, exceeded \$1 million. The Salinas Animal Shelter has a General Fund annual operating budget of \$639,000 and debt service of \$88,000 for thirty years. The state of the art facility with 92 dog kennels, 100 cat kennels, an exercise yard and a get acquainted room was designed to address state unfunded mandates.

Unfortunately, these unfunded mandates have driven up the cost of operations. The City will continue to work with other organizations to increase return to owner and adoption rates. Specifically, the Salinas City Council has undertaken its own initiative directing the animal services program staff to develop alternatives regarding this issue. This report will use traditional and non-traditional methods to reduce the number of animals euthanized in Salinas as well as Monterey County. The report is scheduled for City Council review before the end of calendar year 2002.

The Civil Grand Jury also recommended that the Board of Supervisors allocate funds sufficient for an education program aimed at increasing the public's awareness of animal care and responsibility. We have taken on this effort working collaboratively with others, but unfortunately, education alone does not change social behavior. For example, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has been dedicated to educating the public regarding animal issues for more than a century with only limited success. It is our sincere desire that the City can continue to make progress on this issue by working collaboratively with others to address a wide range of animal services issues in Monterey County.

Unfortunately, the City does not have financial resources to undertake this effort alone. The lack of funding at the state level has severely hampered efforts to begin moving toward the Civil Grand Jury's goal. In addition, it should be noted that the City is facing repeal of its Utility Users Tax in November 2002. Repeal of the Utility Users Tax will eliminate any consideration of proactive programming that addresses the concerns of the Civil Grand Jury. Repeal will also likely reduce current service levels provided by the City shelter.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Civil Grand Jury's report. The City will forward a copy of the Animal Shelter Services report to your office upon completion. If you need clarification or desire additional information on the City's response, please contact Kathi Crain, Animal Services Manager at 758-7031.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Anna M. Caballero", with a stylized flourish at the end.

ANNA M. CABALLERO
Mayor

AMC/wg